When the Brand Is Bad, I'm Mad! an Exploration of Negative Emotions to Brands

Simona Romani, DEIR, University of Sassari, Italy
Hamdi Sadeh, Al Quds Open University, Palestine
Daniele Dalli, DEA, University of Pisa, Italy

This paper attempts to identify the nature and characteristics of individual negative emotions to brands and the antecedent conditions which affect them. Using introspective essays with consumers in two very diverse cultural contexts (Italy and Palestine), our findings reveal that the negative emotions of dislike and anger are experienced to a much greater extent than others, such as sadness, fear, disappointment. At the same time, we observed the presence of three conditions which consumers focus on and react to in the context of brand, noting that these systematically relate to specific negative emotions. Lastly, we examined the consistencies and differences between our qualitative results and those of previous quantitative research conducted on negative emotions in general.

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to identify the nature and characteristics of individual negative emotions to brands and the antecedent conditions which affect them. Using introspective essays with consumers in two very diverse cultural contexts (Italy and Palestine), our findings reveal that the negative emotions of dislike and anger are experienced to a much greater extent than others, such as sadness, fear, disappointment. At the same time, we observed the presence of three conditions which consumers focus on and react to in the context of brand, noting that these systematically relate to specific negative emotions.

Lastly, we examined the consistencies and differences between our qualitative results and those of previous quantitative research conducted on negative emotions in general.

INTRODUCTION

The website called “Hatebook,” a parody of the famous “Facebook”, can be seen to presently be enjoying much success on the internet. Identical to its reputable cousin, but red in color, this site presents itself by way of an elucidatory phrase: “Hatebook is an anti-social utility that disconnects you from the things YOU HATE”.

Its users, who are called haters, do not spare anyone and free rein is given to gossip and backbiting. It is possible to hate anything and everything and to do it in company is considered to be much more rewarding. Not by chance, upon entrance, pops up the message: “welcome to the site of bad.”

Examination of whether these “hate clans”, created “to get rid of all annoying things around you”, include some specifically dedicated to brands, revealed that there were indeed 45 with those most targeted featuring a number of classic cases such as Starbucks, Microsoft, Pepsi, and McDonalds, but notably also Burberry, D&G and Vuitton, etc.

For example, in the description of the “I hate Starbucks” clan, the founder, bartbrains, writes: “Do you think that Starbucks are not really selling coffee but something like water with syrup, cream and sugar? Do you miss the taste of real coffee? Do you think that people go to Starbucks just to be in fashion? Then this clan is for you”.


These cases demonstrate that, while it is possible for consumers to like or even love some brands, have an emotional attachment to or in any case generally positive feelings toward them, at the same time it is also true that consumers can express negative feelings, such as hate, dislike, anger, etc.

Yet most prior examination of consumer-brand relationships has given little consideration to these negative aspects.

This is not to say that negative feelings have not featured in certain brand research; some studies touch upon phenomena closely related to negative emotions and feelings (e.g. Holt 2002; Hollenbeck and Zinkham 2006), but an explicit development of the topic is still notably lacking in the literature.

Above all, the research available on negative emotional reactions to brands is significantly limited, especially in comparison with that conducted on those positive. In terms of negative emotions regarding brands, the almost exclusive focus on brand dissatisfaction is far outweighed by the wide range of positive responses explored—e.g., brand love (Shimp and Madden 1988; Whang, Allen, Sahoury, and Zhang 2004; Carroll and Ahuvia 2006; Keh, Pang and Peng 2007), brand attachment (Thomson, Mclnnis, and Park 2005; Thomson 2006; Park, MacInnis and Priester 2007), brand passion (Fournier 1998), brand satisfaction (Oliver 1997; Fournier and Mick 1999; Giese and Cote 2000) and brand delight (Oliver, Rust and Varki1997; Durgee 1999; Swan and Trawick 1999; Kumar, Olshavsky and King 2001).

In addition, there is limited marketing research addressing the situational conditions, or antecedents, associated with specific consumption emotions (as exceptions, see Folkes 1984; Folkes, Koletsy and Graham 1987; Nyer 1997; Ruth, Bruner and Ottes 2002; Soscia 2007).

This paper aims to address these research gaps in an attempt to identify the nature of individual negative emotions to brands and the antecedent conditions that cause them.

This investigation would provide considerable insights, on a theoretical level, in order to better understand and explain consumer-brand relationships; what’s more, this type of knowledge could be of great benefit to brand managers who need to enhance their understanding of the situational conditions associated with negative emotions in the selected targets and to verify the possibility of devising specific countermeasures.1

In comparison with the prevailing research on emotions and appraisals this study employs a non traditional approach based on unstructured introspective essays involving consumers in two extremely diverse socio-cultural contexts: Italy and Palestine.

This approach allows for stepping back from the dominant paradigms to investigate and describe negative emotions to brands from the firsthand viewpoints of those directly involved (analogous logics are present in, among others, Fournier and Mick 1999 and Kwontnik and Ross 2007). Our goal can therefore be seen to be threefold: 1. develop a realistic account of negative emotions to brands as they arise in everyday life, 2. identify relevant antecedent conditions capable of generating varying negative emotions to brands, and 3. compare this knowledge with prevailing paradigms on emotions in order to reveal possible similarities and differences.

EMOTIONAL RESPONSES AND CONSUMPTION

Emotions can be said to have a specific referent (e.g. consumer is angered by poor shop service).

More explicitly, emotions arise in response to an appraisal of something of relevance to one’s well-being. As specified by Bagozzi, Gopinath and Nyer (1999) “appraisal” means an evaluative judg-

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1In some situations, negative emotions toward a brand could actually be the result of a particular brand positioning strategy that necessarily implies a negative reaction from some specific targets considered not interesting by the company.
ment and interpretation thereof, while “something of relevance” implies a personally experienced incident or episode, an action performed or result produced by oneself, or changes in an object person of thought with personal meaning.

It is important to consider that although types of events or physical circumstances are frequently associated with particular emotional responses, there is not a direct, causal relationship between the two but rather the latter is the result of each individual’s unique psychological appraisal, evaluation and interpretation of the former.

It is possible for the same stimulus to be interpreted in a number of ways, thus giving rise to various emotions: a parent’s forbiddance of his/her child buying a desired product could be interpreted by the child as an unforeseen and intolerable obstacle, perhaps producing anger; or it could well be construed as a way of limiting personal independence, possibly generating sadness. Thus, the resulting emotion is essentially an experience of the emotion producing situation and its potential positive or negative significance for the individual person, and so, varying emotions can be said to be characterized by different situational meaning structures (Frijda 1986).

This central role of appraisal in the formation of emotions has led to the definition of what are aptly called appraisal theories in psychology (e.g., Frijda 1986; Lazarus 1991; Ortony, Clore, and Collins 1988; Roseman 1991; Roseman, Antoniou and Jose 1996; Smith and Ellsworth 1985).

Appraisal theorists maintain that cognitive elements are: a) an integral part of the emotion, in that each emotion corresponds to a specific meaning structure or cognitive examination of the situation; and b) the direct cause of the emotional experience and behavior.

A distinctive feature of appraisal theories is the number and type of cognitive elements that give rise to discrete emotional responses. The literature is extremely rich, but there is also a strong degree of convergence between the different approaches (Scherer 1988; Watson and Spence 2007).

While the confines of this paper do not allow us to present a full review of these theories, we do focus on their use for studying negative consumption emotions, their cognitive appraisal and possible effects.

Folkes (1984) and Folkes, Koletsky and Graham (1987) manipulate the three principal dimensions of causality (locus, stability and controllability) in order to examine their relation to anger. It is clear that respondents in situations where product failure is due to a firm’s controllable actions report higher levels of anger than when it is consumer-related or beyond the firm’s control. Also, anger stemming from failure on the part of the service provider can be seen to be associated with increased negative post-purchase consumer behavior (refund, demanding apology, complaining, etc.).

Likewise, Nyer (1997) manipulates certain appraisals (goal relevance and congruence, attribution and coping potential) ascertaining that various combinations can influence respondents’ anger and sadness in the evaluation of computer products. These emotions are also shown as determinants of post-consumption behavior such as negative word of mouth.

More recently, Soscia (2007) demonstrates the correlation between two different appraisals (goal congruence and agency), guilt and also certain post-consumption behavior such as negative word of mouth and customer complaint.

Ruth et al. (2002), further demonstrate the systematic relationship between nine cognitive appraisals from Ellsworth and Smith (1988) and six specific negative emotions (fear, anger, sadness, guilt, uneasiness and embarrassment) in a consumption context, making use of variance and multiple discriminant analysis.

However, these studies focus on emotions generated by general consumption situations—subjective states that occur when considering, buying or using a product—and not on those specifically elicited by brands; it is possible, therefore, that additional research is required to identify a specific set of negative emotions in relation to brands.

In fact, in the case of a specific focus on emotions in relation to brands we can expect much more emphasis on emotions brought about by reactions to the object and its possible meanings rather than on emotions determined by decision making processes and subjective experiences that characterize consumption situations considered in a broader and more generic sense.

Additionally, it is worth noting that previous research has been experiment-focused or correlational in nature, providing evidence regarding the possible systematic relationship between appraisals and certain negative consumption emotions, based on existing psychological theories; however, a thorough examination of negative emotions as experienced and expressed through the consumer is lacking. Those concerned with marketing have yet to accurately and comprehensively assess these types of emotions in the context of normal everyday life and with regards to brands.

Consequently, this study attempts to address the following research questions:

1. What kind of negative emotions do consumers experience in relation to a specific brand?
2. What are the relevant antecedent conditions capable of generating various negative emotions to brands?
3. And finally, is it possible to relate this set of conditions to salient cognitive appraisals, or an interpretation of situations according to the likely impact on one’s well-being (Bagozzi et al. 1999) as documented in various emotion appraisal theories put forward by a number of authors?

**METHODOLOGY**

In order to address these research questions and further our knowledge of the nature and characteristics of consumer negative emotions to brands, this study employs a projective method. This technique has proven useful in a variety of contexts where more traditional quantitative and qualitative methods fail to achieve an adequate understanding of consumer behavior processes and consumption symbolism (among others, Belk, Ger and Askegaard 2005; Havlena and Holak 1996; Zaltman and Coulter 1995).

Our informants consisted of consumers in both Italy and Palestine. The Italian consumers totaled one hundred and fifteen male and females (equally distributed) aged between 18 and 51 and the Palestinian consumers numbered fifty six (equally distributed) aged between 20 and 25.

Our main intent in selecting these two cultural contexts was to avoid the narrow confines of an individual, typically western country, with an interest in broadening the scope of our data rather than necessarily creating the basis for a cross-cultural, comparative investigation.

We made use of introspective essays as a qualitative, projective method. These essays allowed us to evoke consumers’ feelings and emotions without their being directly guided by an interviewer (Lupton 1996). They were requested to write down the name of a brand capable of generating negative emotional responses, specify these feelings, and provide an open and detailed account of the reasons for their reactions.
Questions and responses were in Italian or Arabic, where appropriate. The essays were analyzed independently by two of the native tongues authors, and additionally we collectively re-evaluated our interpretations a number of times. Not surprisingly, we found both similarities and differences between the two locations, and naturally, our findings are particular to the culture and people studied. However, we found that some differences had more to do with emphasis and specifics than essential content. Indeed, an initially extensive list of areas of difference was progressively reduced during our collective meetings.

From this iterative process, we are able to present our findings by way of topic, noting cultural differences in the presence of systematic evidence.

FINDINGS

Our findings are divided into two parts, beginning with a description of the nature of negative emotions to brands as experienced by our informants and then turning to the antecedent conditions of their occurrence. The latter gives place to most of the discussion about possible cultural effects on emotions toward brands. Following these two sections, we then discuss the possibility of relating this set of conditions to the salient appraisals well documented in emotion appraisal theories by certain authors and consider the potential implications for brand theory.

Dislike and anger as main negative emotions to brands

Firstly, it is worth noting that, with rare exception, respondents were able to effectively describe the emotions they felt toward the brand and differentiate not only between the different basic positive and negative emotional states, but also those more analogous such as sadness, anger, dislike, etc.

Indeed, after focalizing on their chosen brand, respondents’ accounts often concentrate on one particular emotion, describing it in detail and generally keeping it separate from others that can be considered similar in terms of valence, yet distinct in terms of nature and content.

We witness in both research contexts that respondents are by and large spontaneously drawn toward one specific negative emotional state and much less frequently inclined to describe a combination of such emotions.

It appears, therefore, that each emotional state is distinct and characterized by something peculiar to it; a set of psychological sensations capable of making it possible to distinguish one from another.

The two fundamental groups of negative emotions consumers experience to brands can be seen to be centered around dislike and anger.

Dislike emotions2 are typical, affective and aesthetic reactions to brands based on evaluations of unappealingness, which are, in turn, dependent on personal attitudes and tastes.

These emotions are characterized by different levels of intensity, covering a continuum of feelings from simple dislike and to the extreme and global, negative emotion of hate. The typical emotion terms within this range chosen by consumers to express their negative feelings toward brands are aversion, distaste, disgust and revulsion.

So, I felt dislike and distaste toward this brand (P-M, 18)
I don’t trust this brand and I honestly, really hate it (P-M, 20)

Consumers also report feeling cross, irritated, spiteful, indignant toward a brand, expressing prototypical features of the emotion anger.

I feel very cross, irritated and spiteful toward all the Tuna Marina brand products (P-M, 21)
I feel indignant and hostility toward the Coca Cola brand, for many reasons (P-F, 21)

The role assigned to other negative emotions such as sadness,3 fear and disappointment4 is extremely marginal.

Our findings corroborate the suggestion by Bagozzi et al. (1999) that the dominance of the dissatisfaction construct in marketing is possibly due more to its being the primary emotion to receive attention rather than constituting a unique, fundamental construct in and of itself, and that, therefore other negative emotions could be of equal or even greater importance in consumption contexts.

Antecedent conditions of negative emotions to brands

The three main brand-related antecedent conditions which consumers can focus on, evaluate and react to, are the:

• physical object
• symbolic cultural object
• agent

Physical object

Whilst acknowledging the central role of a product’s symbolism in consumption culture, it is also essential to recognize that its physical attributes and functions continue to play an important role. In fact, consumers’ negative feelings can result from an attenuation of their relationship with a brand due to an intentional or inadvertent disruption in its conduct (Fajer and Schouten 1995; Fournier 1998).

Such a breakdown can have a multitude of causes, including the undoubtedly important role played by unmet promises by marketers in terms of brand performance, as reported below:

I literally hate Clinique products. They’re really expensive, and claim to be hypo-allergenic, but I still get an allergic reaction. I felt totally cheated. I mean, I’d practically thrown my money away for nothing (I-F, 20)

Additional factors also capable of generating consumers’ negative feelings toward brands are changing consumer needs, criteria of liking or even the appearance of potentially superior alternatives:

I really don’t like Onyx. It’s okay for a young adolescent target, but it doesn’t go with my way of dressing. When I was younger, I liked the brand a lot, but then I grew up and their stuff just stayed the same. I think it’s a brand that needs updating (I-F, 25).
I really don’t like Lotto products! They’ve hardly changed in years, and have never known how to reinvent themselves in any way (I-M, 19)

2This concept of dislike differs from that put forward by Dalli, Romani and Gistri (2006). In that case dislike was a global, negative consumer response to a brand and not a group of emotions, as in this paper.
3Sadness is often associated with anger; this mix of emotions will be discussed subsequently.
4The absence of this emotion, usually present in consumption situations (Zeelenberg and Pieters 1999), could be explained by the fact that disappointment is specifically related to decision making whereas here consumers’ accounts that focus on decision processes related to brands are decidedly marginal.
In the above cases the brand is considered as a physical object with material characteristics and functionalities with the negative consumer reaction resulting from its relative unattractiveness.

In addition to this type of negative consumer responses to brands that is common to both Italian and Palestinian respondents, we see an interesting phenomenon emerging solely for the latter. It appears that Palestinians’ resentment toward the state of Israel leads to their denigrating the quality of Israeli products and services, perceiving them as personal and culture specific, and consequently disliking these particular brands.

This can be seen to be especially true for products such as food and services, which are particularly culturally imbedded and difficult to disconnect from those who produce them; Palestinian consumers’ animosity can be seen to have a significant negative impact on their perception and assessment of the quality of Israeli products.

In their written reports, a number of consumers can be seen to express negative feelings toward brands that, due to their symbolic associations, are not self-expressive or are connected to one or more specific stereotypes or social groups from which they want to distance themselves.

The sense of dislike expressed below by Rossana is based on the fact that she cannot identify with the brand’s image and, furthermore, that the brand actually appears to her to be associated with a profile she finds objectionable: showgirls. It is clear that this brand does not contribute to her identity construction and, in addition, is capable of shifting her identity toward an undesired self.

I really don’t like Monella Vagabonda! I consider it to be a brand that doesn’t represent me at all; a brand for showgirl types! (I-F, 21)

On the other hand, the negative feelings expressed below by Angela toward Paciotti depend on an association between the brand and particular stereotypical characteristics of the typical user. Angela believes that those who possess Paciotti products have character traits she dislikes. In terms of emotion, the effect is stronger, resulting in “disgust”.

The brand Paciotti really disgusts me! In my experience, people who wear these shoes are usually loutish and pay a lot of attention to appearances (I-F, 27)

Generally speaking, at times brands represent actual or ideal human profiles from which consumers want to distance themselves since they dislike them as such or because of their specific traits and characteristics. In this sense, by association, brands are capable of conveying negative or positive symbolic meanings, and are used as a means for communicating one’s idiosyncrasies to others.

As a matter of fact, our informants from Italy and Palestine can be seen to significantly differ with regards to this dimension. While many Italian subjects make reference to brands as carriers of negative symbolic meanings, no Palestinian expresses such attitudes.

This asymmetry can be explained in a number of ways. Firstly, the situation in the Palestinian territories (the Israeli occupation and acute social and economic recession) can be said to be devastating, with harsh and continual threats to social, cultural and even physical conditions. Understandably, the vast majority of Palestinians concentrate on their primary needs for survival and not on desires (Annajjar 2007; Abdelhameed 2004). Consequently, they attach little or no importance to differentiation, inclusion or exclusion as a matter of cultural and/or symbolic identity construction mediated by consumer goods and brands.

From the situation above it follows that Palestinians live according to a commonly shared subsistence or survival existence that is not a matter of choice as in affluent Italy, but of providence: these consumers are condemned to considering solely the functional aspects of consumption and not those symbolic. In this sense there is little differentiation between these “consumers” and—even for religious or moral beliefs—they give no importance to material goods as a means for social and cultural distinction.

In addition, the Palestinian community can be said to be a sort of tribal community in which everyone is strictly embedded in a complex network of clans and sects. They have no additional “need” for inclusion/distinction as occurs in western societies where individuals have lost their sense of belonging and ask for “linking value” (Cova 1997). They do not “need” goods or services to feel closer to other consumers, since their self is already well-

Moreover, this tribal configuration has the effect of reducing the individual dimension of living: personal expression undergoes “communal” processes such as discipline, obedience and self-sacrifice for group benefit. Individual identity depends on integration within the group structure and—almost by definition—one’s clan or tribe affiliation ensures no need for further “distinction”.

In other words, if properly integrated within the social structure, one’s culture becomes an integral part of belonging to a group, removing the need for “individual” expression.

The agent

According to that presented above, it is evident that consumers attach functional or symbolic properties to the brand as an inanimate object. However, recent studies have developed a richer and more variegated picture of the consumer-brand relationship: the brand’s role appears to be more complex than it used to be. Researchers have put forward the idea of the brand as an active partner in a dyadic relationship (Fournier 1998), a real agent. Consumers actively infer and construct brand meaning, generating emotions toward them, but it can also be argued that brands have their own attitudes to their target markets, which iteratively affects consumers’ evaluations (Dall’Olmo Riley and de Chernatony 2000; McEnally and de Chernatony 1999). This premise is based on the fact that brands act by way of their “parent” company’s actions, such as the everyday execution of marketing strategies and overall (in)activity related to social, ethical and/or political issues.

Following this line of reasoning, brands are considered not only for what they represent, symbolize and communicate, but also for what they actually do with this active role being played mainly through company’s actions. Consumers make little or no distinction between the brand and its manufacturer and the brand becomes a sort of synonym for the company: the company is perceived as the brand and the brand as the company (Aggarwal 2004). When something occurs that is perceived as incorrect, consumers say “brand x did this, brand y did that”, explicitly referring to the brand when speaking about company behavior.

As a result, consumers commit themselves to brands that behave in ways that give the appearance of their sharing common views and values, whilst they are troubled by those seen to have an incorrect conduct, evading the civic responsibilities expected of a community pillar (Holt 2002).

The following excerpts are clear examples of this aspect: consumers explicitly associate regrettable behavior and even hypocrisy to brands. Brands are capable of doing bad things and it appears they can do it purposefully and with satisfaction.

*I feel indignant toward Nestlé. I can’t stand its opportunistic and unethical behavior and the fact that it tries to conceal this by using a false and misleading exterior appearance (I-F, 22)*

Sometimes they like making people angry with them. I am angry and indignant because of their shameless advertisements. They should respect the regional culture and religion of where they are broadcast (P-M, 20)

In the Palestinian reports the brand’s country of origin can be seen to be of great relevance in this perspective. Respondents express strong negative emotions toward brands manufactured in “enemy” countries for political (e.g. Israel or the USA) as well as religious reasons (e.g. Denmark for its publication of cartoons perceived as offensive to Muslims). These consumers recount feeling negative emotions to brands that come from these countries because of their very origin. In these cases, it is not company behavior, but that of certain individuals from the country in question that is extended to the population as a collective subject (the Americans/Danish do this or that) and even to the country itself as an agent (the U.S./Denmark did something).

*I feel really cross, irritated, and spiteful toward all products with the brand-name Tuna Marina; simply because it’s Israeli (P-M, 21)*

I feel indignant and hostile toward Coca Cola, for many reasons; firstly, it is an American company (P-M, 21)

I feel angry and annoyed with this brand because of its country’s disrespect for Muslim feelings and Islam. (P-M, 19).

In short, brands can be conceived as agents: they are given the “personality” to do things, put ways of behaving in to practice. They can also be considered as representative of collective agents (people, countries). This occurs when consumers associate specific events and individual conduct with “collective” properties of the community/country of origin on an ideological, ethical and/or religious level and when their normative implications are perceived as different from those of the consumer.

In these circumstances, the brand acts as an agent and, as such, is able to elicit emotions that can differ from those elicited by the brand as an object, as is apparent in the discussion below.

**Relating brand negative emotions and appraisal theories**

Analysis of our data reveals that the brand-related conditions on which consumers focus, or an individual’s interpretation of brand were often related to particular emotional responses. More specifically, in both research contexts, we see the majority of dislike emotions being associated with the brand perceived as a physical object and those of anger with its interpretation as an agent.

This product is a replacement of an Israeli one called “Tapozena”. Marawi is not a good choice.

The bottle shape is unattractive, the taste is bad, and bearing these qualities in mind, the price is high. Therefore, I dislike and feel distaste toward this brand’s product (P-M, 18).

*I feel indignant toward Nestlé. Of all the multinationals it is the symbol of exploitation, abuse of power and a total lack of ethics. Also, it produces so many products that at times it becomes impossible to avoid buying one of them (I-F, 27)*

In the Italian context, dislike emotions can also be seen to be related to the brand interpreted as a symbolic cultural object.

These systematic relationships between negative emotions and an individual’s brand interpretation strongly relate to salient appraisals documented by various emotion theories.

As observed primarily by Ortony et al (1988), but also, with slight differences, by a number of authors (among others, Ben-Ze’ev 2000; Roseman et al. 1996), the group of dislike emotions result primarily from reactions to objects qua objects whose intensity tends to be influenced by the “unappealingness” of the item of interest.

We found this salient appraisal to be consistent with our data since the majority of dislike emotions are related to an interpretation of a brand as an inanimate object with utilitarian and functional and/or symbolic values. In addition, respondents’ reports on disliked brands can be seen to closely relate to the characteristic feelings, thoughts, action tendencies and goals of dislike identified by Roseman, Wiest and Swartz (1994). A number of respondents...
describe sentiments like wanting to reject and distance themselves from the brand, as illustrated below:

*I hate Dutch! I would never wear it. It’s a rough and vulgar brand ... in fact it’s represented by a big-head like Costantino. I wouldn’t even want anyone to think that I identify with that style, I’d feel terrible.* (I-M, 28)

On the other hand, anger emotions differ from those of dislike since they derive from disapproval of someone else’s questionable actions (and their consequences) rather than a global and detailed evaluation of an object’s appealingness (Ortony et al. 1988). Anger is the classic example of emotions that are “other oriented” (Smith and Ellsworth 1985; Roseman et al. 1996), that is, generated from others’ responsibility. As with dislike, this involves a negative evaluation, but it is the appraisal of particular actions performed by others rather than of an object.

Once again, we found this salient theoretical appraisal of anger emotions to be consistent with our data, since consumers’ interpretations consider the brand as an active agent (Fournier, 1998) by way of its administering managers’ activities or country of origin’s policies. Consumers can be seen to feel anger when these actions are considered unfair and/or questionable.

Respondents’ reports on brands capable of generating anger can also be seen to correlate closely with hypotheses upheld by Roseman et al. (1994) that considers it to be an emotion that involves the desire to attack in order to injure someone else.

Indeed, we see that respondents can feel extremely negative towards brands whose behavior they consider unfair, and wish to seriously damage them, as illustrated below:

*Buck is just one of the Danish brands about which I couldn’t care less about quality. I feel hate and aggression toward all Danish products because of the great insult to the Prophet Mohammed in a Danish newspaper. This offends over one billion Muslims. Indeed, this was condemned and denounced by the Muslim world by way of an economic boycott of Danish brands. So, let this be a lesson to those who attempt to insult Islam in the future. I boycott Danish brands, and I urge all my friends and relatives to do likewise until the government of Denmark apologizes to the Muslim world. I despise any Danish brands, considering them to be disloyal to Islam.* (P-M, 23)

Whereas in the presence of dislike emotions individuals are inclined to avoid confronting the brand, in the case of anger they often wish to correct the brand’s behavior, at times through extreme action or forms of punishment, in order to be able to (re)create a possible relationship with it.

Lastly, some consideration can be given to sadness; this particular emotion is marginally present in consumers’ descriptions, but when it is, it is rarely alone, and often associated with anger. Consumers that disapprove of a brand’s culpable actions are often contemporarily unhappy about the related undesirable events that could derive from them.

*I feel anger and indignation toward Adidas, but also sadness. I saw a documentary in Germany, about how Pakistani children of three years and up make Adidas shoes and other items that I could never buy.* (I-F, 26)

The emergence of this emotional mix in respondents’ descriptions is somewhat unaligned with the theoretical models presented by various appraisal theorists, which tend to emphasize the underlying differences that exist between these two emotions. Ortony et al. (1988) are the only authors that consider a possible association between these two emotional states. Nevertheless, this evidence is somewhat weak and additional research is required to investigate this issue further.

CONCLUSION

Using a qualitative projective method, we found that similar consumer negative emotions to brands occur in two diverse cultural contexts. Our findings demonstrate that the negative emotions of dislike and anger are experienced to a greater extent than others, such as sadness, fear and disappointment. At the same time, we observed the presence of three conditions on which consumers focus and react to in the context of brand, noting that these systematically relate to specific negative emotions.

Lastly, we examined the consistencies with and differences between our qualitative results and those of previous quantitative research conducted on negative emotions in general.

This study complements research on specific negative emotions in the context of consumption. Our findings also prove to be consistent with past causal research on individual consumption emotions such as anger, where we observed the salience of other-oriented responsibility and control, as does Folkes (1984), Nyer (1997) and Ruth et al. (2002).

In addition, we are contributing to that line of research by providing a foundation for studying under-considered consumption emotions, such as dislike.

However, this paper’s main contribution is on the subject of brand, by providing preliminary and relatively new evidence for the vastly under-researched phenomenon of negative emotions to brands. A particular aspect of our findings can also be said to be intriguing from a theoretical standpoint. The fact that anger and dislike are the negative emotions most commonly experienced by consumers, both in isolation and combination with others, offers ample space for reflection on the possibility of enriching the analysis of negative emotional paths in the consumer-brand relationship, given the, until now, sole consideration of dissatisfaction as the typical negative emotional response to brands.

The expansion of this investigation could have important theoretical, but also managerial implications given the importance of limiting, or even better, avoiding the diffusion of negative emotions toward brands for their managers.

This study’s use of a projective method allows for advantages in collecting data about actual rather than prompted or manipulated emotions. However, this needs to be further complemented by alternative projective as well as qualitative methods, in order to evaluate the strength and validity of our results and the possibility to enrich them. Additional research is in progress to address these issues.

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